

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



287 The Workplace and Food

The topic is food and the workplace. Could we be making better choices? I'm Jerry Roberts and today we consider food in and around the workplace, and does it help or hurt our chances to be healthier? That's next, on The Extra Point.

There's a lot more talk these days about diets, and eating in certain ways to enjoy better health. Food regimens with names like keto, paleo, mediterranean, slow carb, vegan and others are now discussed more often in Guam. Many island grocery stores and restaurants have taken notice and are making a bigger effort to cater to those who want to follow specific dietary guidelines.

It's a critical change because 70% of the adult population in the US is overweight or obese. In our little corner of America the number might be 80% or more. With chronic disease afflicting a growing number of people here, intelligent food selection is more important than ever.

While more people are making healthier choices at the store and in restaurants, what about at work? On a couple of counts, the picture isn't as good.

One reason is the tradition of pastries or donuts in the morning, plus coffee. A coworker brings in the sweet stuff and offers it to us, and we don't want to offend the buyer so we take something. Sugar and caffeine rule the morning. Lunch has to be fast for most people, usually just an hour, so it's a drive-thru, food truck, or nearby restaurant that can churn out food quickly. It's usually more simple carbs and some high-fat meats. Our blood sugar spikes again then crashes, and we want to take a nap, but instead go for coffee or an energy drink to make it through the rest of the day.

There's more, when you think about the

number of potluck lunches we put on at work, celebrating for certain holidays and birthdays.

Studies have shown that the kinds of foods we consume either at work, or offsite during lunch hour, are often full of sugar, salt, and substances that wreak havoc on our digestive systems, and lead to the health problems we're all aware of. I'm not suggesting you can never eat these foods, but if this is your diet 24-7, then it's something to think about.

This is not a hot topic of conversation in any company I know of. Health insurance premiums rise every year. Better health results in lower need to use that insurance, and that would mean lower premiums. Still, we don't talk about this. It's too personal. What people eat is their business and companies aren't going to establish rules for what food and drink — other than alcohol — that workers can bring in.

So what can we do? If you have group health insurance, perhaps your insurer will send someone to talk about healthy eating. On an individual level, you can brown bag lunch and/or snacks. Then smile and politely decline the sugary things offered to you. For holiday or birthday gatherings, try adding a couple extra healthy dishes, on top of the normal choices. If people eat them up, add more.

Better health is everyone's concern. Let's talk about it openly at work and encourage people to seek healthier food options.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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